

Alone in the Dark, Together We Rise

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I MĀNOA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS
IN
DANCE
MAY 2017

By

Charlaine Mei Katsuyoshi

Thesis Committee:
Elizabeth Fisher (Chairperson)
Amy Schiffner
Kara Miller

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Preface

Feeling isolated, alone, and stuck; finding camaraderie and support in others; pushing through adversity and advancing together as a stronger collective--these are themes that I drew inspiration from in my work, *Alone in the Dark, Together We Rise*. Isolation can often happen within one's own mind, and it is possible to feel alone while being surrounded by people. I felt stuck, and life was speeding past me. I lacked connection to others. I discovered that everyone is fighting a battle, and that battle does not need to be fought alone. I found great strength in giving and receiving help from those around me.

2016 was filled with immense joy that came with the birth of my son, but along with that also came fear and anxiety. My son was born with a rare genetic disorder and required immediate medical attention. In his first year of life, he underwent four major surgeries, a battery of tests, and lengthy hospitalizations. I found myself sitting in the hospital nursing my newborn baby feeling isolated, alone, and stuck. I had so much on my plate, so many responsibilities to my family, my other two children, my husband, my full time work as a teacher, and my graduate studies, but when my son was born, I felt the whole world stopped. I was sucked into a deep hole. I felt helpless. I was able to face my life's biggest challenge by reaching out for help and support from my family and friends.

When I initially submitted my proposal for my thesis choreography, I was focused on the theme of walls. It was intrigued by President elect Trump's idea of a border wall between Mexico and the United States. The idea of huge walls made me think of other huge walls around the world like the Great Wall of China, The Western Wall, and The Berlin Wall. The idea of walls triggered the theme of keeping people or things out and creating isolation. I related to this idea of isolation in a different way than my original idea of walls, based on what was happening in my life at that time. I wanted to find my way out of my own isolation, and needed help and support to do that. This piece is my journey through difficult times with the help and support of other strong women around me.

Casting

Dancers:

- Dayna Chun
- Charlaïne Katsuyoshi
- Jennifer (Mo) Kearns
- Kaylyn Kumashiro
- Pam Shoebottom

The initial casting of this piece included four gentlemen along with the five ladies. On the first day of rehearsal, none of the gentlemen showed up to rehearsal. The five of us rehearsed for three hours together, and had such a strong connection on that first day, that I decided to keep the piece with just five women. My cast members all came from very different backgrounds. Jennifer Kearns was a PhD student in Mathematics, Kaylyn Kumashiro was an undergraduate student studying Education, Dayna Chun was an undergraduate student studying Marketing and Dance, and Pam Shoebottom and I were both candidates for Masters of Fine Arts degrees in Dance. Despite our differing backgrounds and ages, we were able to come together as a cohesive cast.

Choreography

Interactive Projection Technology

The School of Arts and Humanities Master's Research Award made the use of the interactive projection software, LumoPlay, possible. I had been experimenting with LumoPlay, formerly known as PoMotion since 2016. I liked the idea of utilizing live interactive projections versus overlaying a video over the piece. Live interaction allowed for dancers to improvise in the space and made the projection react in real time. Going into this thesis project, I knew there would be limitations of the performance space. Due to the renovation of the Kennedy Theatre, the Spring Footholds Concert was moved to the Dance Studio, which was converted into a performance space. Despite the limitations of the space performance, the projection and sensor worked quite well. With the help of fellow graduate student, Chris Petrinos, we focused the projector on the floor and back wall, and mounted the sensor directly over the performance space. The initial sensor was a low quality webcam that was only able to sense one person at a time, and the dancers had to be standing directly under where it was mounted. I was able to obtain a higher quality, wide-angle sensor that was able to pick up all five dancers at the same time.

Structure and Intent

In the first section of the piece, the dancers were originally to enter in pre-show lighting, stand in their opening positions, and wait for the lights to go to darkness

revealing the projection, before taking their beginning positions either on the floor or standing. The piece began with the five women seemingly isolated within their own space, performing solo and duet movement while the interactive projection responded to their movements. The projection was comprised of simple black rectangles that spun and scattered in response to the lighting and the dancers' movements. The dancers choreographically explored the space around them. As they realized the limitations and the restrictions of that space, they retreated back into themselves. The dancers tried harder and harder to break out of their own confinement, and became more aware of one another. They broke through their barriers and formed a group, then ran through the space in linear, angular patterns. The group found its identity together and again prior to each dancer's individual solo. They learned how to be together as a group, while maintaining and also discovering new aspect of their own individuality. In the third section, the dancers' relationships with one another grew stronger through small group and duet sections. They finally found their strength as an entire unit as they travelled along a strong diagonal from upstage left to downstage right with precision and in unison.

Movement Description and Development

The movement vocabulary and motifs for this thesis work were developed through the process of improvisation. I employed body writing, in which the dancers utilized different parts of their bodies and planes in space to write letters or words, and partnered contact improvisation as guided improvisation tools. The beginning section was an exploration of each dancer's space. The movement I selected represented testing

boundaries and retreating into oneself. A running motif was introduced early in the piece. In the first section, stationary running is intended to elicit the feeling of running and getting nowhere. There was a clear shift in the first section as one dancer began the stationary running, then slowly the entire group joined. After coming together with stationary runs, the dancers broke out as a group and travelled through the space with linear running patterns. Linear and angular running patterns, which referenced the angularity of the projection design, became circular and sweeping. Another movement motif was the shifting of weight from two legs to one. This shift was first introduced at the beginning of the second section during the spoken word text, “... *do you really know where you are at this point in time, in space, and in reality, and in existence....*”. During this text all the dancers shifted their weight to their left, which provoked one of the dancers to continue into a deep side bend. This deep bend was intended to represent looking at something upside down. The dancer gestured with her right hand as though she was trying to turn what she was looking at right side up. The group leaning image refers to changing perspective on something, much like tilting one’s head to the side to gain a different perspective.

Rehearsal Process

The rehearsal process for *Alone in the Dark, Together We Rise* was artistically fulfilling and fun. Most of our rehearsals happened on Sunday afternoons or late in the evening. The rehearsals were very collaborative between the dancers and myself. I would often consult with the dancers about what they felt worked or didn't work, and what felt good or awkward on their bodies. We had open discussions about the themes of the piece, and the emotions behind them. We bonded as a cast through food. For every rehearsal I would bring a buffet of snacks. We snacked during breaks and chatted about life, the piece, dance, and school. Much of the rehearsal process was about getting to know each other and forming friendships.

Music

Mixed compilation score 14min, 30sec

Section 1: *3001AB*, Huerco S.

Section 2: *One Earth, One People, One Love*, Kronos Quartet & Terry Riley

Section 3: *Fly*, Ludovico Einaudi

The music helped define the three shifts of theme and mood throughout the piece. The opening section, *3001AB* by Huerco S., had an electronic score including sound effects of breathing and digital glitches. The second movement, *One Earth, One People, One Love*, by Terry Riley performed by the Kronos Quartet, combines spoken word with ambient and a string quartet music. This section begins with spoken text describing seeing planet earth from space.

“...You have to literally just pinch yourself and ask yourself the question, silently, do you really know where you are at this point in time, in space, and in reality, and in existence. When you look out the window and you’re looking back at the most beautiful star in the heavens. The most beautiful because it’s the one we understand and we know it, we’re home, it’s humanity, people, family, love, life, and besides that it is beautiful. You can see from pole to pole and across oceans and continents and you can watch it turn, and there’s no strings holding it up, and it spinning in a blackness that is almost beyond conception....”

This text challenged me to change my perspective on where and how I believed I fit in the in the world and in the universe. I related the “...blackness that is almost beyond conception...”, to the hole that I had sunk into in my own isolation. This text was

followed by trance-like melodic string quartet music. The improvisational dance solos were performed to each cello solo, as the group danced to the hypnotic music in the background. The final section was set to *Fly*, by Ludovico Einaudi. It begins with piano melody and morphs into a harsh minor almost wailing pitch that fades to silence.

Production and Performance

Costumes

Dancers wore varying hues of gray and black patterned leggings with white tunic tops that had an asymmetrical hem. The angularity and asymmetry of the tops reflected the angularity of the projection design. The tunics flowed nicely as the dancers moved. The white fabric created another clean surface for the projection, and helped the sensor pick up the dancers movements more easily.

Lighting

The lighting designer for the piece was Chicako Omoso. She crafted the lighting to illuminate the dancers and also to play with the projection design. As the lights popped brighter, the projection reacted and the rectangular pieces appeared to scatter in the space. The opening section was dark, with lighting on the soloists in hues of blue. The lighting in the second section included purple, giving the effect of more expansive space. The final section moved into warmer sepia tones, further opening the space, and ended with a dramatic strong red light from up stage left. The strong red light was the choice of the lighting designer, and was used to mirror the dramatic change in the music at the end.

Reflection

When I began working on my thesis choreography, I was worried about the requirement of having to perform in the concert. I did not want to choreograph myself into the piece, because I would never be able to see the piece from the outside, but also I didn't want to ruin my own piece because I felt I would appear to be out of shape. As the creative process chugged along, I gave into the idea that I either had to put myself in my own piece or create a solo for myself. I realized I did not have the extra time for rehearsals and technical rehearsals to make another piece just for me, so I choreographed myself into my thesis. Looking back, I am glad I did. I had fun dancing with my cast mates, and feeling the bond and camaraderie of being on the stage together. I realized how much I miss that feeling of sharing those moments with friends on the stage. In my original choreographic proposal, I envisioned a larger piece with moving walls. I wanted a larger cast in which I could establish a community, and relationships within the group, then breaking up that community. I am glad in the end that I paired down the cast, and the idea. The space was intimate, and didn't need a lot of moving parts and pieces to have a profound impact on the audience.

Appendix 1: Thesis Proposal

Thesis Choreography Proposal

The Wahl

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine
Arts in the Graduate School of The University of Hawai‘i Mānoa

By

Charlaine Katsuyoshi

(2016-2017)

Thesis Committee Members: Betsy Fisher (Chair), Amy Schiffner, Kara Miller

The Wahl

The Wahl is my reflection on the recent presidential election. The race for the presidential election was all consuming. Monopolizing the news and social media, the election was fraught with scandals and mud slinging. Issues like immigration, health care, gun control, and climate change were hot topics in the debates, with Donald Trump vowing to build a wall between Mexico and the United States. The idea of building a wall to keep immigrants out seemed so preposterous to me, but it made me think of other enormous walls built in history such as The Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall, the Wailing or Western Wall to name a few. Walls create the idea of barriers and separation between groups of people. Walls are built to keeping people in, to imprison them or maybe keep them safe, or to keep people out to exclude or shut them out. Some have compared the election of Donald Trump to the rise of Hitler. Similar to many Americans who have been suffering through tough economic times, Germans in the early 1930's lacked confidence in their government. Poor economic conditions, and the loss of WWI stirred discontent among German citizens, and provided the chance for the rise of Adolf Hitler, and his party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party. *Wahl* is the German word for *Election*. The pronunciation of the German word *Wahl* is somewhat of a homophonic translation to the English word *Wall*. The piece will be structured much like an election, with two people vying for power over a community. I will use the idea of building walls and dividing society to drive the choreography of my thesis piece.

Casting:

8-9 dancers, mixed men and women

Potential cast (contingent on availability):

Christine Maxwell
Michael Romney
Kaylyn Kumashiro
Dayna Chun
Corbett Stern
Terry Slaughter
Pam Shoebottom
Elissa Ota
Charlaine Katsuyoshi

The Structure:

The beginning of the piece will establish a small simple community (Full Cast). A friendship will develop between a man and a woman (Duet). The man and woman will both emerge as strong leaders within the community (2 Solos). The group will begin to divide as they chose their leader (Full Cast). The separation between groups will create conflict within the community and one group will overtake the other. The leaders and their followers will battle for ultimate control over the entire community (Full Cast). Walls will be reflected in the choreography as the dancers create walls in formations with their bodies.

Movement Description and Development:

I would like to develop movement vocabulary and motifs through the process of improvisation. I will employ body writing and partner contact improvisation as guided improvisation tools. The beginning section will incorporate rounded curving movements

and sweeping formations in curving and circular patterns. There will be a clear shift in later sections to reveal angular sharp movements that mimic the Nazi salute and the goose step. Formations and floor patterns will become more militaristic and linear.

Production Elements:

-Approximate run time: 15-17 minutes

-Location: The New Dance Building UH Mānoa

-Props: I would like to use an actual black wall on wheels that can be moved in the space to create masking and also to define different spaces.

-Lighting: I would like to create a warm environment in the beginning while establishing a cohesive community. A clear shift to a darker colder lighting as the community breaks down and separation is established.

-Costumes: Dancers will be in varying hues of gray and tan. Loose $\frac{3}{4}$ pants, tattered, muslin or burlap type fabric. Short-sleeved t-shirts with shredded bottoms to imply poverty and simplicity.

-Music: Mixed compilation score TBD

Timeline:

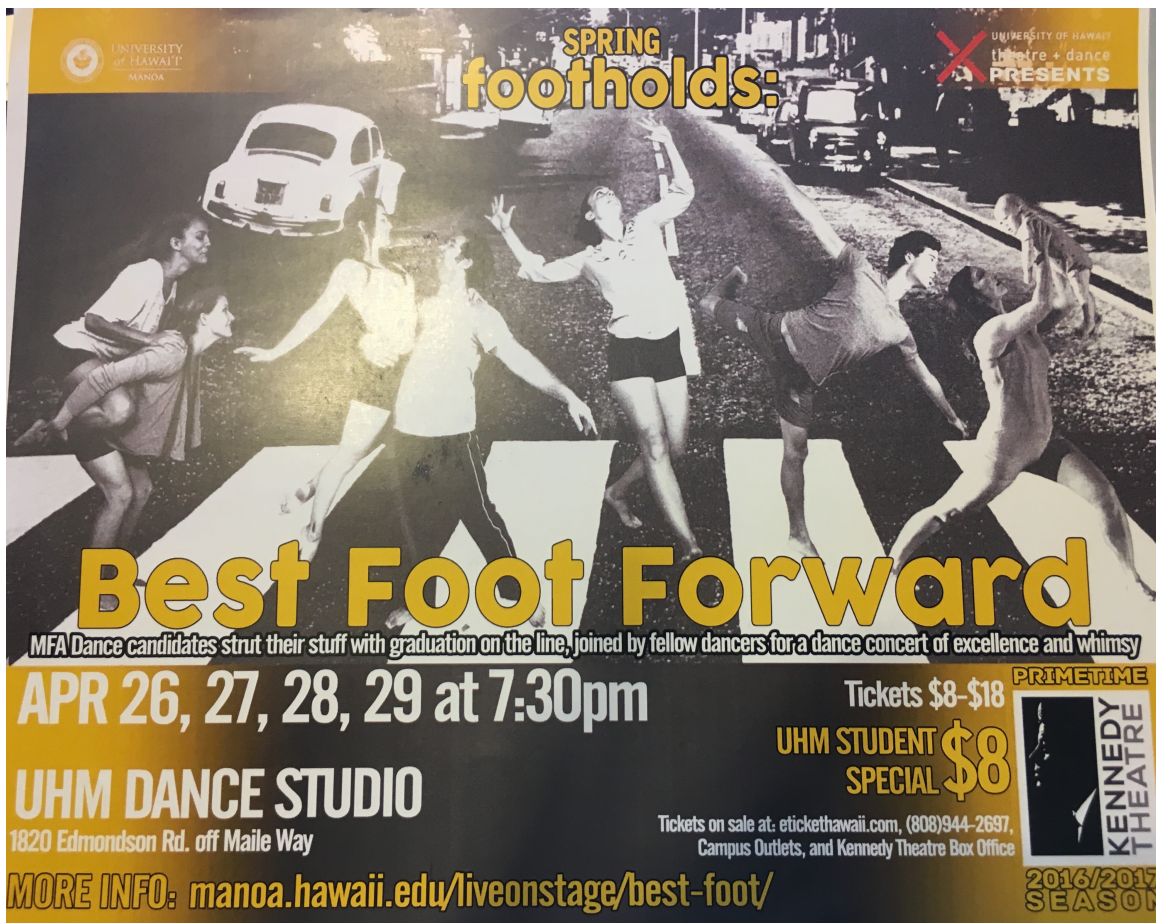
December 2016: Appointment of thesis committee

December 2016-January 2017: Rehearsal period Saturdays 12-2pm UH Dance Bldg.

February 2017: Thesis Concert Footholds 2017, February 15-19, 2017

Appendix 2: Publicity

Concert Poster



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
MANOA

SPRING footholds:

Best Foot Forward

MFA Dance candidates strut their stuff with graduation on the line, joined by fellow dancers for a dance concert of excellence and whimsy

APR 26, 27, 28, 29 at 7:30pm

UHM DANCE STUDIO
1820 Edmondson Rd. off Maile Way

Tickets \$8-\$18
UHM STUDENT SPECIAL \$8

Tickets on sale at: etickethawaii.com, (808)944-2697, Campus Outlets, and Kennedy Theatre Box Office

PRIMETIME KENNEDY THEATRE

2016/2017 SEASON

MORE INFO: manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/

Concert Program

kennedy theatre staff

Department Chair: Betsy Fisher
Director of Dance: Gregg Lizenbery
Production Manager: Rick Greaver
Theatre Manager: Jessica L. Jacob
Operations Coordinator: John Wells
Technical Director: Gerald Kawaoka
Assistant Technical Director: Montana Rizzuto
Costume Shop Manager: Hannah Schauer Galli
Assistant Costume Shop Manager: Iris Kim
Costume Shop Assistant: Amber Baker
Office Staff: Lori Chun, Lindsey Rice

front of house staff

Box Office Supervisor: Mark Shiroma
Box Office Staff: Christian Cesar, Adam Cook, Layne Higginbotham, Lexi Moreno, Lauren Vance
Publicity Director: Kevin C. K. Berg
Publicity Assistant: Jennifer Takahashi
Graphic Designer: Michael Donato
Photographer: Jessica Jacob, John Wells
House Manager: Catherine Kindiger
Assistant House Managers: Layne Higginbotham, Lauren Vance

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MAINSTAGE 2017/2018

THE SPITFIRE GRILL

a musical by James Valcq & Fred Alley

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THREE XIQU PLAYS

a family friendly program of tales from China

NORA by Ingmar Bergman

based on **A DOLL'S HOUSE** by Henrik Ibsen

Program subject to change pending contract completions.

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PRIMETIME

2016/2017 SEASON



SPRING footholds:



Best Foot Forward

April 26, 27, 28*, and 29 at 7:30pm

*Post-show rap

UHM Dance Building

UNIVERSITY of HAWAII
MĀNOA

Department of Theatre + Dance
College of Arts and Humanities

Concert Program (cont.)

spring footholds:

Best Foot Forward

artistic staff

Concert Director: Gregg Lizenbery

Lighting Design: Chikako Omoso

Sound Design: Brian Shevelenko

Costume Coordination: Iris Kim,
Marc Marcos, Cheri Vasek

concert program

performed without intermission

ALONE IN THE DARK, TOGETHER WE RISE

Choreographer and Projection Design: Charlaïne Katsuyoshi*

Music: Huerco S., Terry Riley, Kronos Quartet, Ludovico Einaudi

Dancers: Dayna Chun, Charlaïne Katsuyoshi, Maureen Kearns, Kaylyn Kumashiro,
Pam Shoebottom

Projection Software: Lumo Interactive Inc. (Made possible by the College of Arts and
Humanities Graduate Student Research Award)

TÍR NA NÓG

Choreographer: Michael Romney*

Music: Traditional, Stephen Twigger

Dancers:

Oisín: Michael Romney

Finn (Oisín's Father): Maseeh Ganjali

Niamh: Ariel Gazarian

Enbarr (The Guardian): Isaac Johnson

Ensemble: Emma Majewski, Christiana Oshiro, Robin Worley

By using a combination of traditional Irish dance, contemporary Irish dance,
modern, and contemporary ballet, the Celtic legend of Oisín and Niamh in Tír na
nÓg is brought to life.

PEERING IN / OVERHEARD

Choreographer: Terry Slaughter*

Music: The Punch Brothers

Sound Collage: Terry Slaughter

Dancers: Marley Aiu, Ariel Gazarian, Lexi Gilman, Maureen Kearns,
Chandler Louque, Terry Slaughter, Theo Steinman, Angela Valdez

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the MFA in Dance

THE LORAXIAN EFFECT

Choreographer: Christine Maxwell*

Part One: 32" Perspective

Music: Miles Davis

Dancers: Rachel Booze, Ariel Gazarian,
Kristen Johnson, Alisa Olko

Part Two: From What's Left

Music: Dave Ballou

Dancers: Amy Bukarau, Maureen Kearns, Pamela Shoebottom

Part Three: Causal Sequence

Music: John Coltrane

Dancers: Rachel Booze, Ariel Gazarian, Kristen Johnson,
Maureen Kearns, Alisa Olko, Grace Parson, Elizabeth Savage

Epilogue: Fallible

Music: Bob Thiele and George Weiss, spoken word by Louis Armstrong

Dancer: Christine Maxwell

"Some of you young folks been saying to me: 'Hey Pops, what you mean. 'What a
wonderful world? What about all them wars all over the place? You call them
wonderful? And how about hunger and pollution? They ain't so wonderful either.'
Well how about listening to old Pops for a minute. Seems to me it ain't the world
that's so bad, but what we're doing to it and all I'm saying is see what a wonderful
world it would be if only we'd give it a chance." —Louis Armstrong

production staff

Stage Manager: Raquel Palisbo

Stage Crew: Emily Hoadley, Samantha Iha-Preece, Christine Kanehiwa,

Kenny Kusaka, Kela Neil

Wardrobe Supervisor: Amy Johnson

Faculty Consultants: Betsy Fisher, Peiling Kao, Kara Miller, Amy Schiffner,
Cheri Vasek

front of house information

The UHM ticket program is supported in part by a grant from the Student Activities
and Program Fee Board.

For large print programs or any other accessibility requests please contact the
House Manager.

After dark: to arrange a Campus Security Escort from any two points on campus
please see a House Manager.

As a courtesy to your fellow audience members and to our performers, please
remember that eating, drinking, video recording, photography and use of cell
phones and other electronic devices is not allowed inside the theatre. Please take a
moment to turn off any sound or light emitting devices now.

Footholds Press Release



Contact: Kevin C. K. Berg, Publicity Director Office Phone: (808) 956-2598
Fax: (808) 956-4234 Box Office: (808) 956-7655 Email: ktpub@hawaii.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Department of Theatre + Dance University of Hawai'i at Mānoa 1770 East-West Road Honolulu, HI 96822
Web: manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/

March 31, 2017

Kennedy Theatre Presents Spring Footholds Dance Concert

Student Choreographers Début Dynamic Contemporary Dance

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to conclude its 2016/17 Primetime Season with *Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward*. This

dance concert brings together four Master of Fine Arts in Dance candidates, dance students, choreographers, technicians, and designers to create an intriguing performance of contemporary dance. Performances take place April 26, 27, 28, and 29 at 7:30 p.m. in the

beautiful UHM Dance Studio built in 2013, since much needed upgrades are in progress at Kennedy Theatre.

The title of the show, *Best Foot Forward*, symbolizes this moment in the academic and artistic achievement of four Master of Fine Arts degree candidates at the eve of graduating and launching their professional careers. Each is producing highly involved dance pieces as their thesis, the culmination of their studies, practice and transformation in the UHM dance program.

Best Foot Forward dance choreographer and MFA candidate Charlaïne Katsuyoshi is a world class dancer with performance credits from around the

globe. After growing up in Honolulu (Nu‘uanu), she graduated from U.C. Irvine and worked in the film and television

industry. She continued her professional dance career with Momix Dance Company, danced for nine years with Hubbard Street Dance, and was a Lar Lubovitch Dance Company member who toured through Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Katsuyoshi was cast as the cheetah in the Broadway touring show of Lion King in 2006 and subsequently returned to

Honolulu where she currently teaches dance at Mid-Pacific Institute while pursuing her MFA in Dance from UHM.

This particular *Footholds* also features choreographer and MFA candidate Mike Romney presenting *Tír na nÓg*, a piece inspired by the Celtic legend “Oisín and Niamh in Tír na nÓg.” Romney shares that “I was also inspired by my experience in Irish step dancing and theatre and wanted to do a sort of ‘story ballet’ using folk tales and folk dance” In the story, Tír na nÓg is the Otherworld, a land of everlasting youth, beauty, health, abundance and joy. When asked about his personal and artistic motivation Romney replied, “Why dance? Simply put, because dancing makes me happy and I want to share my happiness and help others find their own happiness.”

Another *Best Foot Forward* choreographer, MFA candidate Terry Lee Slaughter, premieres three movement pieces: *Peering In*, *Happy Birthday*, and *Overheard*. While these pieces don’t share the same subject, they do share a theme of voyeurism. “I was inspired by the curiosity to know more about one another’s most intimate/personal moments,” Slaughter says, “I have always been a curious person. While at UH I have been finding the means in which to explore this curiosity.”

Choreographer and MFA candidate, Christine Maxwell, presents her culminating work *The Loraxian Effect*, a piece inspired by Dr. Seuss’ *The Lorax*. “I wanted to create a narrative that could address environmental concern without the piece becoming too ominous,” Maxwell says, “There is so much power in the arts - developing life skills, healing communities and individuals, preserving culture, engaging in social activism - the list goes on.”

Tickets to *Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward* may be purchased online at www.etickehawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at official outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office the week of the show. For more information, visit http://manoa.hawaii.edu/liv_eonstage/best-foot/

Television News Broadcast Featuring dancer Charlaine Katsuyoshi in 2007:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_TLJKZPLfg

EVENT :

Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward

PRESENTED BY:

UHM Department of Theatre + Dance

WHEN:

April 26, 27, 28, and 29 at 7:30 p.m.

WHERE:

UHM Dance Studio, 1820 Edmondson Rd. (off Maile Way) Honolulu, HI 96822

TICKET PRICES:

\$18 General Admission \$16 Seniors / Military / UH faculty and Staff \$13
Students/Youth \$8 UHM Students with valid UHM photo ID

Ticket prices include all service fees.

PURCHASE INFO:

Tickets are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office; the box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday during show weeks, with extended hours on performance dates.

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Appendix 3: Costume Photos

